



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

My USDA

A Progress Report for Employees on
USDA's Cultural Transformation

September 2011
Volume I, Issue 9

USDA's CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION ITEMS

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT
AND RETENTION
- TALENT
MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE
DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS
AND COMMUNITY
OUTREACH

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A Message from USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack

The following is an edited conversation with Secretary Tom Vilsack about managing change at USDA. You can see the entire interview at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg3NnQVKcdk>

USDA IS REVIEWING OPERATIONS, LOOKING AT WAYS OF IMPROVING AND INNOVATING CHANGE. WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

SECRETARY VILSACK: The Department has an opportunity to provide better customer service, especially in a time when we're faced with constrained resources. Budgets are going to be impacted and that represents a challenge. Do we look at it as a very difficult thing that we have to go through, or do we see this as an opportunity to improve USDA and our customer service? I think it's better for us to manage change than for change to manage us. I have a great deal of confidence in the people of USDA to come up with solutions to this difficult challenge we face and to do it in a way that actually leaves us better off than where we started.

WHAT ARE THE DETAILS OF THIS PROCESS?

SECRETARY VILSACK: The key is to make sure that we identified the areas where we wanted to explore new opportunities. There were a number of areas, including Civil Rights, human resources and personnel issues, property management, procurement, and technology...all areas where there may be a duplication of efforts.

Through the process we've learned a lot: We have 45,000 vehicles. That raised the question of how often do we trade vehicles in? Maybe we should be looking at trading cars in less frequently to save money over time.

We found out that we have over 50,000 structures. That includes a number of small buildings, certainly, but we need to take a look at it. Can we do a better job of utilizing our space more efficiently?

There are many opportunities, large and small, like how many cell phone contracts do we have? We have over 300 that we've identified, and that is more than we need.

Can we focus on how we purchase technology? Each mission area may have different software needs but, at the same time, maybe the hardware needs can be more consistently purchased.

This is designed to be as collaborative and transparent as possible, with no predetermined notion of how this is going to turn out, other than creating a more customer friendly and effective USDA. We will save money, and it also allows me, in discussions with OMB and Congress, to point out that we have taken steps to be efficient and that this isn't a situation of waste, fraud, and abuse. I want USDA to be the premier Department



of the Federal government in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. I want it to be recognized throughout the federal government as the place where they were the most creative, most innovative, most responsive to this challenge and did not shy away from it but embraced it and made the best from it.

This is a creative, proactive, innovative process. How do we best use our resources? How do we preserve the key workforce that is necessary to provide those services? And how do we maintain as much money in those services as we possibly can to do the work that's so important for rural America?

I know it's difficult. This is a period of great anxiety within the country and within the federal family. But if we control our future, it makes it easier to deal with the circumstances when budgets are being reduced.

Tom Vilsack
Secretary

Contact MyUSDA via email:
MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

PRESIDENT OBAMA ISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDER TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

President Obama has issued an Executive Order that requires all Federal agencies to develop plans for improving diversity in the workplace. The Washington Post calls it the “highest-profile response to a problem that has been on the Administration’s radar.” A council made up of deputy agency chiefs will work with the Office of Personnel Management, the Office of Management and Budget, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to create a government-wide plan within 90 days. Then, agencies will present their own specific diversity plans demonstrating initiatives on recruitment, training, and promotion. To read the Executive Order, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom>

UPCOMING SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM OBSERVANCES

September is Hispanic Heritage Month. The USDA Observance is scheduled for Thursday, September 15, 2011, at Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC, at 10 am.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The USDA Observance is scheduled for Wednesday, October 5, 2011, at the Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC, at 10 am.

Veterans Day Observance, November 10, 2011, at Jefferson Auditorium.

National American Indian Heritage Month Observance, November 16, 2011, at Jefferson Auditorium.

IF YOU'RE IN DC, ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR!

If you'd like to share feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of worklife at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to USDA Connect.

If you haven't read previous issues of MyUSDA, here's your chance!

[MyUSDA Issue 1](#) [MyUSDA Issue 2](#) [MyUSDA Issue 3](#) [MyUSDA Special Issue—Summary Progress](#)

[MyUSDA Issue 4](#) [MyUSDA Issue 5](#) [MyUSDA Issue 6](#)

[MyUSDA Issue 7](#) [MyUSDA Issue 8](#)

WHAT DO YOU THINK? MESSAGES FROM USDA EMPLOYEES



Beltsville Area's Leaders of Tomorrow Celebrate Fourth Annual Summer Program

This year's committee members included Alex Calderon, Brendon Gregoire, Diamond Gross, Melanie Hymes, Diamond Kosh, Jessica Lahocki, Linda Li, Peter Lau-Lopez, La'Shelle Manning, Kimberly Mills, Da'Jon Porter, Jessica Palmen, Duk Shin, Wesley Suggs, and David Wang.

By Jenny Allen



In my capacity as Program Manager for the Beltsville Area, it has been my privilege to work for the past four summers with a committee of summer interns that we call the *Leaders of Tomorrow*.

The group celebrated their Fourth Annual Summer program on August 3, 2011. The purpose of the program is to raise awareness of cultural diversity in the workplace, to recognize the importance of teamwork, and to build character in our next generation of leaders. The interns organize, coordinate, and publicize the entire program – everything from identifying an educational theme to designing the program booklet to inviting the distinguished guests.

This year's program theme, "USDA Careers: An Interactive Forum," focused on the diverse career options within the USDA and the need for a diverse workforce supporting cultural transformation. The distinguished panelists included Dr. LeAnn Blomberg, Dr. William Kustas, Mr. James Poulos, Dr. Monica Santin-Duran, Dr. Gregory Sample, Mr. Dan Thessen, Mrs. Sandra L. Thomas, Mrs. Tara Weaver-Missick, Mr. Lou Weber and Mr. Michael

Witles. Speakers were Beltsville Area Director Dr. Joseph Spence and Ms. Jojuan Gross.

"This was our best program to date and I've been on the committee since 2008," stated Finance Intern Trainee, Brendon Gregoire. "Being a member of the Leaders of Tomorrow committee has really been a great learning experience which emphasizes the importance of teamwork, time management, and communication. We're cultural transformation at its best."

Since its inception in 2008, the program has been supported by Dr. Joseph Spence and the Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville. "Thank you for another successful summer program," wrote Dr. Joan Lunney, Research Leader of the Immunology and Disease Resistance Laboratory in Beltsville. "The diversity of students on Wednesday was impressive. Each intern had good questions for the panelists and seemed to have profited from the Leaders of Tomorrow program and ARS's summer employment."

Share your pride in USDA with a message to fellow employees.

What do you think? Send an email to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov and let us know.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: FNS—The Spotlight's on YOU!

While the entire Department has made Cultural Transformation a priority, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is a shining example of what can be accomplished. Here's just a sampling of the events and activities undertaken by FNS in recent weeks.



TEAM BUILDING AND DIVERSITY STRESSED AT BOATING EVENT



Sadie Walton

Sadie Walton (above right), who works in the Mountain Plains Regional Office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service in Denver, Colorado, rowed for "Fed Force" in Colorado's 11th annual Dragon Boat Festival on July 31 at Sloan's Lake. "FedForce" is sponsored by the Colorado Federal Executive Board, which FNS-MPRO is a member of and includes federal employees from agencies around the Denver area.

The Dragon Boat Festival is a traditional Asian holiday that originated in China. It is celebrated under different names and with local variations in many countries including Viet Nam, Singapore, and the Philippines. Beyond the competition, the Denver event serves as an ethnic celebration of Colorado's rich Pan Asian American heritage, showcasing diverse cuisine and performing artists. Attendees can also spend time browsing the unique and rare arts, crafts, and vendor booths that are more likely to be found in the markets of Hong Kong, Tokyo, or Manila.



The Dragon Boat Race is underway!

Participants trained together for many months prior to the race. Sadie said she learned that moving a 2,000-pound boat takes a true team effort. "Everyone has to be in sync to get the boat up out of the water at a fast enough pace to actually win."



FNS Celebrates Women's Equality Day

The 19th Amendment, which extended the right to vote to women, was ratified on August 26, 1920. As part of its ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service celebrated this important anniversary and marked Women's Equality Day on August 26, 2011 by showing *Iron Jawed Angels* at its Alexandria, Virginia headquarters. The movie, which premiered on HBO and won a Golden Globe award, chronicles the suffrage movement from 1910-1920. *Iron Jawed Angels* will be made available to regional offices who wish to view it as well.

Additional information on the women's suffrage movement and the 19th Amendment is available on the following website: <http://iron-jawed-angels.com>.



MARO's 360-Degree Pilot Promotes Development and Improves Performance

The Mid Atlantic Regional Office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (MARO) values opportunities for employee success and sees them as an important aspect of Cultural Transformation. That's why MARO's Employee Development Committee began looking for ways that employees could assess their own effectiveness. Ultimately, a 360-degree online survey was selected to provide an accessible way for all employees to receive feedback from subordinates, peers, and supervisors. Proven to increase individual and organizational effectiveness, 360-degree assessments are not new to FNS or to MARO. However, the novel aspect of MARO's implementation is to make the process available to all staff at all grade levels.



MaryAnn Salvatore uses things she learned from the 360 Assessment to reach her professional development goals.

Even though it was not a requirement, over a quarter of MARO non-supervisors elected to participate. "I found out things that I didn't realize. It's easy to make assumptions about the way you are perceived, and receiving feedback from various staff throughout the office was a big help. It also helped me think through some generational differences and become a better listener," said Ellen Shannon, the Regional Civil Rights Director. After six months, the positive impact of the MARO 360-degree pilot can still be felt, and its feedback will come in handy for developing employees' Continual Learning Plans (CLPs).



Ellen Shannon shares some of what she learned with her colleague, Monique Hatten.

FNS Celebrates National Farmers' Market Week

In August, staff from the Supplemental Food Programs (SFPD) office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service celebrated National Farmers' Market Week with a Pot Luck luncheon at FNS Headquarters in Alexandria, VA. Employees prepared and shared dishes made with food purchased at a farmers' market or grown in their own gardens. The event highlighted the benefits of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition



Program (SFMNP) and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). As a result, it reinforced Cultural Transformation's "Customer Service and Community Outreach" pillar, which calls upon employees to better understand FNS programs and the people they serve. Last year, nearly 3 million participants purchased fresh fruits and vegetables from over 20,000 farmers in these two programs.



FNS TO LAUNCH "KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT" PILOT

Did you know that by the end of 2014, more than 20% of the current Federal workforce will retire?

It is critical that USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and other agencies work to ensure access to retiring colleagues' accumulated wealth of institutional knowledge after they leave. That's where Knowledge Management (KM) comes into play. KM includes a range of strategies to identify, capture, and distribute relevant information. Planning for an FNS Knowledge Management Pilot Program, a product of the Leadership Institute, is well under way. The FNS Knowledge Management Pilot Program promotes cultural transformation by being employee driven. It calls upon individuals to share the expertise that they have acquired over many years with their colleagues in an effort to create a **higher performing** organization.

The initiative seeks to help fill gaps that can occur when employees leave an organization. It also benefits new hires and current staff by delivering resources in a format that is very user friendly. Additional details will be rolled out within the coming weeks. Stay tuned.



Ed Morawetz, who will soon retire after 32 years of service, shares valuable insights with colleagues from SNP's Child Nutrition Division. The session was recorded and will be made available for all staff for future on-demand retrieval.

Forest Service Honored with “Outstanding Employer Award”

Employees of the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region recently received an “Outstanding Employer Award” from the State of Oregon's Department of Human Services.

By Nita Wornom, Forest Service Regional Disability Employment Program

Kent Connaughton, Forest Service's Regional Forester, received the award on August 3, 2011, from the Department's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, for their hiring practices for people with disabilities. Director Errin Keey-Siel recognized the Forest Service for striving to go the extra mile in hiring people with disabilities, including youth, as well as for displaying a culture of inclusion, displaying a leadership strategy from the top of the organization down through all levels of the region. The state chose the Forest Service for this award over about 1,000 other employers.

In 2009, the Forest Service entered into a partnership with Oregon's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Oregon Commission for the Blind, and State of Washington's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Through the partnership, the region now has an applicant pool of more than 8,000 skilled and talented people with disabilities to fill critical positions in the Forest Service.

Since September of 2010, the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service successfully employed 16 people with disabilities from the local community. Regional Forester Kent Connaughton said, “Through this partnership, the Forest Service has the greatest probability of filling vacancies with [Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Oregon Commission for the Blind] clients, which brings a tapestry of diversity to our existing talented organization.”



Forest Service Regional Forester Kent Connaughton receives “Outstanding Employer Award” from the State of Oregon's Department of Human Services.

USDA EMPLOYEES HOLD BLOOD DRIVES FOR U.S. ARMED FORCES

USDA employees are helping members of the U.S. Armed Forces fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. USDA is hosting additional blood drives for the Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) after two successful previous blood drives.

ASBP ensures that blood and blood platelets are available to on-duty members of the armed forces who need it. They also supply to dependents of U.S. servicemen and women. ASBP provides blood and platelets to all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, collecting between 50-100 units per week. At least two patients are helped as a result of each unit collected.

If you're in the Washington, DC, area, please mark your calendars so you can participate in an upcoming USDA blood drive for ASBP.

October 5th – 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Whitten Patio, Washington, D.C.

November 9th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the USDA George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, MD.

For an inspiring and informative video on the work accomplished by the ASBP, watch <http://www.youtube.com/militaryblood#p/u/6/YnSPN3L3SUo>





MyUSDA Column

Diversity & Disabilities

By Alison Levy
USDA Disability Employment Program Manager

A cornerstone of our USDA Cultural Transformation effort is to increase employment of individuals with disabilities. This column includes information, resources, and success stories from throughout USDA that are being shared to support this initiative.

As we make strides toward increasing our hiring of individuals with disabilities into the USDA workforce, it's important to learn and embrace the different cultures and languages which comprise our individual employees. In honor of Deaf Awareness Week, an annual event that takes place during the last week of September, this column will provide an introduction to increase USDA's awareness and understanding to help bridge communication between hearing and Deaf employees.

Deaf Culture: What is it?

People who are culturally "Deaf" are proud of their identity and compare themselves to members of other ethnic communities where a common language, education, tradition, and social life are shared. Deaf people recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary or native language and most likely attend residential schools for the Deaf. Because ASL is a visual and not a printed language, mastery of ASL and skillful storytelling are highly valued in Deaf Culture. Through ASL Literature, one generation passes on to the next its wisdom, values, and its pride and, thus, reinforces the bonds that unite the younger generation. Being Deaf is considered a cultural difference; not a disability.

The most common form of reasonable accommodation to Deaf employees is to provide sign language interpreters. When working with sign language interpreters, remember the following tips:

- ◆ Make sure that there is a clear line of sight between the interpreter, the meeting facilitator, and the Deaf employee, and that traffic in front of the interpreter is kept to a minimum.
- ◆ Interpreting is physically demanding. Interpreters may require occasional breaks. Assignments of an hour or more in length that are technical, non-stop or high profile may require a team of interpreters.
- ◆ Talk with the Deaf person, making eye contact, not with the interpreter. For example, avoid saying, "Tell her I need to meet with her."
- ◆ Speak at a normal pace.
- ◆ Allow only one person to speak at a time.

Bridging Communication

There is great diversity among Deaf and hard of hearing people that impacts communication in the workplace. However, educating work groups about Deaf culture, basic ASL, tips for working with interpreters are all great skills that help bridge communication and develop better team work. For brief, informal conversations, employees may follow some basic tips to help show understanding and improve communication.

Tips for Communicating

- Face the person
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace
- Don't shout: it distorts your voice and facial expressions
- Be sure your mouth is visible while talking
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, misunderstood words

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (as amended), USDA has a legal responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. Only 30 percent of all spoken sounds are visible on the lips. Therefore, speech reading (or lip reading) alone is not normally an effective communication method for most Deaf people.

Resources

Learn basic American Sign Language by enrolling in a community college or local adult education program.

Bookmark the following On Line American Sign Language Dictionary to learn a few basic signs: <http://www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi>.

Connect with Statewide Services for Deaf/Hard of Hearing People: <http://norclercenter.grou.ps/525064> to learn more about Deaf culture, how to obtain interpreters, and to identify more resources in your community.

TELEWORK AT USDA

By Work/Life & Wellness Manager **Mika Cross** and Work/Life and Wellness Student Intern **Oeshae Morgan**

Did you miss USDA featured on the “Making the Grade” webcast about Telework?

If so, please be sure to check out the archived recording located at: <http://www.teleworkexchange.com/events/webcast/events-detail/956>

MAKING THE TELEWORK GRADE **WEBCAST:** Meeting the Telework Enhancement Act Requirements



Be sure to join USDA at the October 18th **Telework Town Hall Meeting** at the Ronald Regan Building in Washington, D.C. for the “Powering Telework Progress” session spotlight, featuring Mika Cross, Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager. For more information and to register, you can visit: www.teleworkexchange.com

Advances in the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Program A USDA Process Improvement Project, (Part I)

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program was launched under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in 2004. Within EQIP, CIG was developed to demonstrate and stimulate the adoption of innovative conservation practices on America's farms and ranches.

“It was a tremendous opportunity for NRCS to get innovations on the ground,” says Dr. Wayne Honeycutt, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology. “It's also a tremendous responsibility for managing public funds, and we wanted to ensure we were reaping all the intended benefits of the program.”

Dr. Honeycutt had attended training on Continuous Process Improvement (CPI), a method that has been adopted by USDA to improve both efficiency and results. CPI is a specific and rigorous approach that uses a framework to identify processes, analyze which pieces of the process are adding value or are broken, target those spots with improvements, and implement changes that will maintain the improvements over time.



Photo of a Conservation Innovation Grants project in Oregon.

Julia Zehner, of the Strategic Planning and Accountability Deputy Area, is the first “CPI Practitioner” in NRCS. Julia assisted the CIG project team through the process steps to identify the scope of the problem and what was working well and what wasn't.

“I have assisted the team through the phases to define, measure and analyze CIG's processes and prepare for the ‘toll-gates’ after each phase”, Julia says of her work with Dr. Honeycutt's group. “When you think of it, all conservation began as innovation. It is gratifying for me to be a part of the Conservation Innovation Grants CPI project.”

As an agency executive, Dr. Honeycutt is a fan of the toll-gates. “Each step in the CPI process provides an opportunity to have a ‘toll-gate’ with management and the project team. After we all agree on the approach, management lifts the toll-gate, and the team moves on to the next step.”

With the project winding down this fall, Dr. Honeycutt still has his eye on the ball. “Our grant program needs to accelerate the adoption of innovative conservation standards for public use. Technology transfer is the number one goal.”

Next month: Part II – Conservation Innovation Grants – Value and Improvements

INTERN SPOTLIGHT: CLAIRE RUNQUIST

This summer, I had the lucky opportunity to be a part of the inaugural class of Wallace-Carver interns, which stemmed from a partnership with the World Food Prize. Being able to work at the USDA this summer was an extremely contrasting experience to my World Food Prize Borlaug-Ruan internship last summer.

Last summer, I was at the World Vegetable Center in Hyderabad, India doing research on home gardens as a means to eliminate poverty and malnutrition. So much of that experience was learning the culture and exploring a country.

This summer, with the USDA, I had the opportunity to work within a system that has played a much bigger role in my life in a city full of history and history in the making.

My internship focused on environmental and agricultural policy research, exactly what I'd hoped to learn about and work on. I'm a sophomore at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, and plan on double majoring in political science and environmental studies, so it aligned very well with my studies.

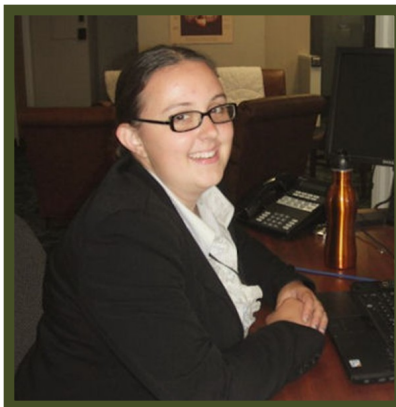
I was able to assist in research for people high on the policy chain within the USDA on issues of sustainability and food security. I interned in the Office of the Secretary and was privileged to be able to work for Robert Bonnie, Senior Policy Advisor on Natural Resources and Environment. My research with sustainability was an assessment of the state of play in sustainability right now in both the agricultural and corporate fields.

The biggest focus of the research was the standardization of sustainability. This is important, especially for consumers, as a means of being able to tell how sustainable a product or a company is. I was also able to help Lona Stoll with research on Feed the Future, which feeds into another of my passions—global food security.

This summer was about more than working. It was about an experience of working in government and in working in what I love. I had the opportunity to attend Congressional hearings and meetings on the 2012 Farm Bill and felt like I was a tiny part of what was happening within the Department and within the country.

The USDA has given me a tremendous opportunity and a huge head start on figuring out what it is that I actually want to do with my life.

—Claire Runquist



Claire Runquist participated in the first class of Wallace-Carver interns at USDA—a group that stems from USDA's partnership with the World Food Prize.

MyUSDA Publication Schedule

The October issue of *MyUSDA* will be published on Wednesday, October 19, 2011.

The deadline for October submissions is Friday, October 14, 2011.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to *MyUSDA* should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area has achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue)

The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it.

Email submissions or further inquiries to
MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

The Office of Human Resources Management Hosts the 63rd Annual Secretary's Honor Awards

By Anna Johnson-Yeargins

The 63rd Annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony will be held on Wednesday, September 14, 2011, in the Jefferson Auditorium with a reception to follow in the Whitten Patio area. Attendees are asked to arrive at 1:30pm to get a seat in time for the ceremony, which will begin promptly at 2:00pm. The ceremony is one of the best ways to recognize employees and celebrate their accomplishments for helping USDA meet its missions and goals.

The Secretary's Honor Awards recognizes the highest level of employee achievement, they are the most prestigious awards presented by the Department. Employees at all grade levels are eligible for recognition. This year's theme is "A Modern Workplace with a Modern Workforce" which reflects the USDA's commitment to attracting and retaining a high-performing workforce, well-equipped for today's mission, and well-prepared for tomorrow's challenges.

The 2011 Honor Award categories reflect the Secretary's key priorities:

- ◆ Secretary's Award for assisting rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving
- ◆ Secretary's Award for ensuring our National forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources
- ◆ Secretary's Award for helping America promote sustainable agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Management Excellence – A Modern Workplace with a Modern Workforce
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Support Service
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Heroism and Emergency Response
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Diversity

YOUR IDEAS ARE SAVING TAXPAYER MONEY!

A SAVE (Securing Americans Value & Efficiency) suggestion is saving Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) approximately \$200,000 a year. Marjorie Cook, a FSIS Food Inspector in Michigan, suggested that labs ship supplies back via ground freight instead of more expensive air freight. With an average of 17,500 shipments per month, data from the 1st few months demonstrates FSIS is well on its way towards the savings goal.

Have you ever wondered how ideas are collected for process improvements? One way is the SAVE Award initiated by the White House in 2009 which captures employee and citizen ideas. Some USDA agencies also have in-house methods for collecting employee suggestions. The White House encourages SAVE suggestions that improve the quality of a product or service, simplify a process to reduce administrative burden, or improve the speed of a government operation to improve efficiency.

Through your agency's USDA Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) Champion, ideas become possible process improvement projects based on mission, strategic goals, and available resources. Under the direction of the USDA CPI Champions the 1,206 SAVE Suggestions received in 2010 were categorized.

Of the 1,200 suggestions received in 2010, approximately 200 suggestions could have potential Department-wide impact. If you would like to see the 644 SAVE Suggestions received this year for USDA, please go to this link:

<http://saveaward2011.ideascale.com/a/ideafactory.do?id=10760&mode=recent&discussionFilter=byids&discussionID=56809>

USDA SIGNS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR EQUITY IN PUBLIC SERVICE (NCEPS)



Front row: Dr. Alma Hobbs, USDA, and J. David Reeves, Chair of NCEPS and National President of Blacks in Government.
Back Row (from L to R): Edna J. Harvin Battle, NCEPS Exe. Assistant Secretary; Danny Garceau, SAIGE; Dr. Kin Wong, FAPAC; Sylvia Chavez, IMAGE; Sue Webster, FEW ; Julius Crouch, NCEPS Executive Director

Established in 1994, the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS) is a joint initiative of leading national organizations that promote the participation and advancement of minority and women managers and employees in the Federal Government.

NCEPS is composed of the elected officers of the following organizations:

- Blacks in Government (BIG)
- Federally Employed Women (FEW)
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC)
- Hispanic National Image (Image)
- Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE)

NCEPS jointly monitors and represents minorities and women on such issues as equal employment opportunity policies and practices, implementation of the No Fear Act, SES candidate development programs and other Federal recruitment initiatives, workforce management, outsourcing, and civil rights in general such as monitoring the Government's service to and treatment of minority Americans and immigrants. (See MOU signing photo above.)

Are you interested in learning more about USDA's Telework Program and other top Work/Life and Wellness initiatives? Be sure to subscribe to our Work/Life and Wellness listserv to stay in the know! Send an email to telework@dm.usda.gov or connect with our [Work/Life and Wellness](#) if you have a USDA Connect account!

Cultural Transformation Team Receives EEO Award

OCFO Receives New Orleans Federal Executive Board's EEO Team Leadership Award

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) Cultural Transformation Team has received the New Orleans Federal Executive Board's (FEB) EEO Team Leadership Award. The award recognizes the Team for embracing cultural transformation and creating a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect and provided the opportunity for success. The team's goal of cultural transformation is to get everyone at OCFO New Orleans committed and engaged. Devoted to ensuring USDA is a place of equal opportunity for all employees and everyone is empowered to reach their full potential, the team aspires to ultimately make USDA an employer of choice within the Federal Government. The OCFO houses four specific organizational units in the New Orleans complex which include: the National Finance Center; Financial Operations, Controller Operations Division; Financial Services; and the Working Capital Fund Division.

A few of the specific initiatives implemented include:

- ◆ The identification and establishment of cross-training opportunities across organizational lines within the OCFO, the awarding of an executive coach contract and vehicle for 360 degree assessment for GS-14 and above managers.
- ◆ Gaining critical insight into employee morale and issues by creating a "You Spoke" and "We Listened" atmosphere.
- ◆ Establishment of partnerships with local universities; participation in the Mayor's Job 1 summer program by hosting 12 minority high school students.
- ◆ Initiating healthier food choices in vending machines and the on-site cafeteria.
- ◆ Implementation of monthly learning series on health and wellness topics.
- ◆ Development and implementation of performance/competency-based structured interviewing process and conducting a work life wellness survey with a 60% response rate and an aggressive plan for implementation of several of the survey results.

"The OCFO Cultural Transformation initiative helps us open meaningful dialogue with all employees regarding their issues, and finding resolution and implementing programs to address these issues." according to John White, Director of the National Finance Center.

The FEB also gave honorable mention for the Team Award to the National Finance Center's Information Technology Services Division for their Cultural Diversity Luncheon.



PHOTO CAPTION: Carrie Quick, Chief, Human Resource Management Staff; Dr. Claudette Millsap-Austin, Chief, Administrative Management Staff; Joan Archer, Motivational Luncheon Speaker;; Juanda Rogers, Director, Continuity of Financial Management Programs & Process Improvement; Alva Chase, Associate Director of Customer Support; Denise Brewton, Director, Civil Rights; Marcia Curole, Chief, Management Support Office; and, Mary Thomas from the IRS, Chair, New Orleans' FEB. Team members not available for the picture were Cheri Alsobrook and Marquette Defillo.

My USDA Staff:

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